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**46th Session of the Commission for Population and Development
General debate on national experience in population matters: New trends in migration —
demographic aspects**

**Statement by: Ms. Telma Viale, Director,
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Mr. Chairman,

Today, more people are living outside their country of origin than at any other point in our history.

Economically active people, together with their families, account for more than 90 per cent of the total record number of 214 million international migrants.

Migration today is linked, directly or indirectly, to the world of work and to the search for decent employment opportunities and a better life.

In agriculture, construction, domestic service, academia and medicine, many migrants with diverse backgrounds are bringing new skills and economic vitality to their host countries, while helping to support their families and loved ones back home.

Yet, the lives of too many migrants are marked by looming insecurity, precarious work conditions, discrimination and xenophobia. In some cases, they are victims of economic marginalization, and often lack access to basic social protection, including health care, pensions and other essential social guarantees.

The promotion of decent work for migrant workers therefore must be a central element in the discussions on migration governance.

As the UN's specialized agency on labour issues, the ILO has been working for more than six decades to create a solid normative foundation for the protection of migrants' rights and to provide technical assistance in the development, improvement and adoption of national labour migration laws, regulations and policies in various countries.

In this opportunity we would like to convey five key messages:

First, the **ILO defends a rights-based approach to labour migration**. The ILO Conventions on Migration for Employment, No. 97 (1949) and Migrant Workers, No. 143 (1975), were pioneers in international law to define international standards on labour migration and ensure that migrant workers are afforded the same rights and protections as their native counterparts. These

instruments are more relevant than ever and should be used as a core reference on the governance of labour migration.

Second, **this is not only about rights, but also about economic gains.** Research shows large potential welfare increases for the global economy through the liberalization and good governance of migration policies. Some estimates suggest that enhanced international labour mobility could yield gains of around 30 percent of global GDP.

Migrant labour is often the most effective way to fill skills shortages present within different sectors of the economy, and provides an agile response to fast-changing demand resulting from technological advances, changes in market conditions and industrial transformations. And in this respect, we cannot overlook the importance of “skills mobility”, taking into consideration gender issues and a priority focus on youth.

Third, the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation No. 202 (2012), adopted unanimously by ILO member states, has reaffirmed that access to social security and other essential guarantees for all is indeed a human right, and this includes social protection for migrant workers. Healthy, secure workers are productive ones who contribute to and help sustain social security systems in countries where fertility rates are declining and the number of working-age individuals is also falling.

Fourth, **it is fundamental to address the specific labour protection needs of the large and growing population of domestic workers** in which international migrants are largely overrepresented. Of the 52 million domestic workers globally, only 10 per cent are currently covered by the same labour laws as other workers, while more than a quarter are excluded entirely from national labour legislation. Recognizing domestic workers’ rights as labour and human rights is at the heart of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention No. 189 (2011) and accompanying Recommendation No. 201.

Fifth, **adequate regulation of recruitment agencies is also crucial to prevent unscrupulous practices that place migrants in situations of dependent employment.** False job offers, excessive fees, and high-interest credit provision for travel and job brokering services are all ways in which migrant workers fall prey to exploitation and abuse. The ILO’s Private Employment Agencies Convention, No. 181 (1997) requires states to prevent abuse of migrant workers by private employment agencies to eliminate unethical recruitment practices.

To conclude, **as international migration is largely a labour market and decent work issue, the world of work needs to be adequately reflected and mainstreamed in debates on international migration and development at the global, regional and national levels.** The involvement of business, trade unions and civil society in this process is fundamental in order to build sustainable partnerships.

As we move toward the 2013 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, the ILO stands ready to assist our constituents, and welcomes opportunities for cooperation and collaboration from all potential partners in promoting decent work and ensuring justice for migrant workers and in making migration work for all.

I thank you.